

## **EDP Fundamentals**

### **Background**

The mission of Michigan's Career Preparation System is that all students completing the Michigan education system will have the necessary academic, technical, and work behavior skills for success in a career of choice and in lifelong learning. Within the Career Preparation System, emphasis is placed on Career Development, so that all students will become involved in a process that will prepare them to make choices and decisions regarding career directions and setting goals. An Education Development Plan (EDP) provides ongoing documentation of an individual's career and educational decisions and a plan of action that guides the learner in accomplishing these goals. Implementing EDPs with middle and high school students promotes their learning a decision-making process. Individuals will continue to use these same career decision-making strategies as they progress in the education/training process, enter employment, and change careers throughout a lifetime.

EDPs have been used in Michigan schools for several decades. Although not mandated through Michigan law, EDPs have been recognized in various state and federal initiatives and career guidance activities for many years. With districts having made commitments to the importance of EDPs, an opportunity now exists to reinforce and align efforts in this area. It also provides an opportunity to collect the best thinking in the state on EDP development and to benefit from information about various implementation strategies. In addition, with the increasing availability of computerized options and the complexity of the changing workplace and changing employment opportunities, educational/training agencies may want to consider revising their EDP processes at this time.

The intent of this paper is to define and describe the purpose and content of EDPs from a state perspective. The paper also contains fundamental principles for developing EDP processes, state recommended essential elements to be contained in EDP documents, and several recommended strategies for implementation. It is hoped that these ideas will form a basis around which consensus can be formed and on which other state, regional, and local activities can be built. In this way it is believed that school-aged youth and adult learners can be provided consistent and compatible information and resources across Michigan.

### **Definition**

An Education Development Plan (EDP) documents an ongoing process in which a learner identifies both career goals and a plan of action to achieve them.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the EDP is for each learner to develop, document, and periodically update a unique plan of career and educational preparation, based on thoughtfully selected and attainable career goals and educational options. This plan will then provide guidance in taking effective steps to enter or to advance in a career pathway of choice.

### **Rationale**

Students need answers to important questions: Who am I? Where am I going? How do I get there? Students begin to develop answers to these questions as early as elementary school where they become involved in learning activities that allow them to develop an awareness of self and an understanding of work and occupational roles in their communities. Middle school students, by developing EDPs, become engaged in a process which they can continue to explore and examine their interests, skills, and abilities, and begin to make decisions about selecting a career for the future. Educators can assist high school students in determining what courses and other experiences to pursue to reach these goals. Parents and mentors provide young people of all ages encouragement and opportunities to better understand their areas of interest. Having these long-range plans stated and recorded will influence students' day-to-day decisions as well.

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They can become more intentional about being successful in their classes and in selecting extracurricular, leisure-time, and employment activities. As they progress through the educational system, students will continue to secure information from a variety of sources, benefiting from experiences shared by adults currently employed in those fields, and participating in work-based learning provided by the private sector.

As students prepare to leave high school, having found answers to many or most of their questions, they can be more confident about their choices and enter college, other postsecondary learning opportunities, or employment experiences with a clearer direction in mind. These career development efforts over time help learners address the complexities of career planning and preparation and help to ensure that they will have taken effective steps for entry into employment, continuing education, and longer-term career success. Adult learners, while much more independent in planning and educational activities, continue to use a career decision-making process that helps guide their preparation for satisfying and productive employment.

### Principles

Based on past experiences of implementing EDPs in our schools, colleges, and other community agencies, and because of their benefit to students, some observations and general principles are important to consider in defining the content and process of EDPs.

- 1. The primary emphasis of the EDP is the learner's statement of career goals and a plan of action for reaching them.** In this sense, it differs from other educational records, such as transcripts or portfolios, which record attendance, grades, and other examples of accomplishments. While schools or community colleges may choose to link these documents, it is not the purpose of the EDP to be used as a record of performance or an evaluation tool. The EDP summarizes a learner's career goals and educational plans, and provides a method for the student to plan for his or her future.
- 2. An EDP is learner-centered with each learner taking an interactive role in its development.** Making decisions about one's career goals ultimately belongs to the individual. Others may be supportive of the process, providing information and resources and offering opportunities for reflection and planning. However, to become independent adults, young people require opportunities to consider their own interests and talents, try out their choices, and take responsibility for the activities which they pursue. Developing and revising EDPs provides learners of all ages with opportunities to be personally involved in their own goal setting and in choosing the steps they will take to reach those goals.
- 3. EDPs require updating at least annually and provide for a progression of planning activities as the learner advances through the grades.** Career planning is developmental in that the learner's plans become more comprehensive and specific as they advance in age, awareness, and educational and work experiences.

Elementary students develop an understanding of the world of work, exploring the many ways people contribute to society. They also develop an understanding of the breadth of opportunities open to everyone and the value of developing their own interests and talents. They will use their imagination and curiosity to explore the characteristics of careers and their future roles in them.

Middle school students beginning to evaluate career and educational goals for themselves will initially approach career planning in a general way, answering some questions for the first time. Through continued exploration they will expand their knowledge about career options and better understand their own interests and skills. In high school, when they become more experienced with the planning process and have accumulated more awareness and information about their preferences and options, they will be able to add more ideas and detail. They will continue to revise their career goals, course selections, and educational plans.

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Young adults preparing to leave high school will need to evaluate and select options for education and/or employment and participate in application and orientation activities. They will project within the EDP some of the activities involved in the selection and application processes, including possible majors or fields of study or other types of additional experience and preparation.

Recent high school graduates or other adults enrolling in community colleges or other postsecondary institutions may develop EDPs reflecting career goals and a curricular program within the college setting.

Adults exploring career changes may develop EDPs that identify new or revised career goals and educational or training options for achieving them.

The information recorded within EDPs will vary depending on the age and educational level of the individual. For example, a high school plan that is introduced in middle school (being used through completion of a high school program, and projecting plans for options after high school) will include different detail than a continuing education plan that is introduced to high school seniors and/or is used by community college and other adult learners to describe their postsecondary career goals and educational/training programs.

4. **All learners may benefit from participating in an EDP process.** All learners progressing through the educational system or reentering an educational/training programs need to complete a planning process that involves career goal setting and determining the preparation that will be needed to accomplish these goals. EDPs do not preclude other types of planning for individuals who may have specialized needs requiring various types of support services or fulfillment of local policy or legal requirements, e.g., student support team plans, IEPs, etc. However, virtually all students in the K-12 system who are able to actively engage in a planning process may benefit from development of EDPs.
5. **To be effective, EDPs are dependent upon a larger career development process.** In schools this process includes participation in career pathways, career awareness, career exploration, career assessment, and a comprehensive guidance and counseling program. The connections of the EDP to these other Career Development activities are critical to its meaning and success for learners. EDPs do not stand by themselves. They are representative of an individual's decisions and plans at various intervals, illustrating his or her status at any given time in an overall career development process.
6. **Education and workforce agencies need options in terms of EDP formats.** To meet a wide range of school and community demographics, resources and characteristics across Michigan, the development of multiple strategies for implementing and maintaining EDPs is preferred. Districts and/or regions will benefit from the opportunity to choose among several options, selecting those that best meet their needs and criteria or developing their own formats to suit their specific delivery systems.
7. **Local and regional agencies are encouraged to adopt state recommended essential elements in EDPs.** So that learners can more easily be provided materials and resources that are consistent and complementary, state-supported projects and initiatives and local and regional entities are asked to utilize the state recommended essential elements for EDPs. Local agencies may add to these elements, providing customized formats designed for their specific needs or special features of their career development programs.

### Essential Elements for EDPs

Certain basic elements emerge as the most essential to accomplishing the intended purpose of EDPs. While EDPs may be customized to meet additional individual agency/regional objectives or record-keeping

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capabilities, these elements will help ensure that all learners have the opportunity to include critical information and decisions in their planning. These basic elements are recommended to be part of all EDPs:

1. **Personal Information**
2. **Career Goal(s)**
3. **Educational/Training Goal(s)**
4. **Assessment Results**
5. **Plan of Action**
6. **Parent Consultation/Endorsement (under age 18)**

1. **Personal Information – Typically, personal information includes the student's name, dates of birth, and grade level in school.** As educational/community agencies develop electronic formats that are networked or web-based, some are reducing the detail of this information and using identification numbers and passwords in order to limit access and protect confidentiality. In schools, EDPs should be protected by the same policies governing other student records, and when appropriate, parents and students should be notified in writing of security issues and precautions.
2. **Career Goal(s) – Each learner identifies a career pathway goal(s).** Young students choose several broad career interest areas by listing career pathways in order of preference. Older students who have had opportunities to refine their choices over time should be asked to become more specific about occupational goals, stating both desired a career pathway(s) and related job titles.
3. **Educational/Training Goal(s) – The learner identifies the level of educational preparation he or she wants to attain.** In addition to high school completion, young learners need to set long-range goals regarding the formal education or preparation they will pursue upon graduation. Options include on-the-job training, military service, apprenticeship programs, other trade and technical education programs, certificate programs or 2-year associate degree programs offered by community colleges, 4-year university programs, and advanced university degree or professional preparation programs. College and other adult learners will continue to identify the education they intend to complete in order to prepare for a career, to update skills, to change career direction, or to advance in a career field.
4. **Assessment Results – The learner summarizes in a few words the results of assessments, highlighting information that is relevant to making career decisions.** Learners need opportunities to use the results of formal assessment (career interest, aptitude testing) and informal observations (for example, areas of success in class projects, hobbies, and/or student organizations) in choosing career goals. Assessment information may also include academic achievement indicators, work styles and other preferences regarding working conditions. From this information, learners identify individual areas of interests and strengths. They may also select areas in which they want to improve. Watching for consistency of career assessment results and trends in interests and accomplishments over time, learners will be aided in confirming career decisions and continued direction.
5. **Plan of Action – The learner lists: a) career awareness/exploration and work-based activities and b) course selections that will prepare the learner for greater understanding of career options and achievement of career goals and/or continuing education.** Activities may include volunteer or work-related experiences including job shadowing or mentorship programs in community businesses and seeking part-time employment in areas related to the career goal. In addition, learners may investigate educational programs available within the school or college curriculum that will provide opportunities to become more aware and skilled in a career pathway, e.g., participation in a technical education program, an internship in a community agency, or intensive project-based learning within a particular course. Course selections are projected, indicating completion of high school, and the desired advanced degree, certificate, or other specialized preparation program. Timelines for application to college or university programs, financial assistance, and /or employment opportunities may also be indicated.

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- 6. Parent Consultation/Endorsement (under age 18) – Parents of high school students should have the opportunity to review and endorse their child's EDP.** Because the job market and occupational skills requirements are changing so rapidly, parents as well as students, will want information that explains emerging fields, employment trends, and the education and skill requirements needed to prepare for successful employment. Many times they will also want career assessment and academic information interpreted to them or to have opportunities to ask questions about their concerns. Often they assist their child's continued education by providing financial, transportation, and other types of resources. For these reasons, parents of students in middle and high schools should be offered consultations about EDPs by the school, and students should be encouraged to discuss career-related issues with them.

### Recommended Strategies for Implementation

Implementing EDPs effectively with all learners requires thoughtful planning and action. EDPs must be connected to a larger career development process involving a total school effort. Career Development, as designed within the Career Preparation System, includes a full range of experiences for students relating career pathways, career awareness, career exploration, career assessment, and a comprehensive guidance and counseling program. To assure that EDPs are connected to these other Career Development activities and that EDPs are meaningful and promote learner success, several general strategies are recommended.

#### 1. Career Pathways Implementation

By organizing teaching and learning within a Career Pathways structure, schools enable educators and students in making meaningful connections to broad areas of career opportunities reflective of the current and emerging world of work. A Career Pathways approach helps students by engaging them in a process that will provide a number of learning events throughout their school years in which they can more fully identify, assess, and prepare for their career goals. Curricular activities can be designed and implemented across disciplines and developmental levels to coordinate career pathway themes and instruction. In high schools, course offerings can provide students a sequence or concentration of learning experiences that help students align career pathway choices, initial career-related skills development and postsecondary education opportunities. Thus as students prepare, review, and revise career pathway choices as part of their EDP process, they will be doing so based on ever-increasing understandings of their options, skills, and preferences.

#### 2. The Michigan Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program (K-12)

Within the K-12 system, the *Michigan Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program* (MSCA, Revised Edition, 1997-98) provides a method for school counselors in coordination with other educators to organize their efforts to assure that all students will acquire and demonstrate competencies in the areas of academic, personal-social, and career development. Working collaboratively with students, parents/families, teachers, administrators, and the community, school counselors deliver the Program through four broad components: Guidance Curriculum, Individual Planning, Responsive Services, and Systems Support.

Counselors may use any one or all of these approaches to provide for the career development of their students. A scope and sequence of career development activities can be designed and implemented based upon the student benchmarks listed in the Comprehensive Program in collaboration with total school planning efforts. Schools will want to provide students a sufficient number of these activities from elementary grades through high school so that students will develop a depth of understanding that supports a career decision-making process and the completion of EDPs. Most middle school and high school counselors will consider EDP development to be integral to the program component of Individual Planning and will provide leadership in the implementation of EDPs within their buildings.

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### **3. *Advanced and Continuing Education Career Planning (Post High School)***

At the adult and postsecondary level, learners become the managers of their own EDPs. They independently seek out information and guidance from various professionals including academic advisors, career planning and placement offices, and other student support services personnel. Community colleges, other postsecondary institutions and community agencies including Michigan Works! Service Centers (job search centers) are encouraged to provide an EDP model with clear directions on the types of assistance available in various locations, access to reliable and detailed career information resources, course selection/training sequence and enrollment requirements, and the connection of course work, internships, or other preparation to specific career and educational goals. Many colleges and community institutions offer in-depth career assessment and interpretation as well as placement services or courses on career planning that provide information on employment opportunities. Such programs can assist learners with career decisions and search activities.

### **4. *Using Regional and Local EDP Planning Groups as a Place to Begin***

Some schools and areas have extensive experience in EDP development. Others may provide EDPs to target groups of students only or are just getting started with a new EDP process. In any instance, it will be helpful for regions, districts, institutions, and other agencies to come together to discuss various issues, observations, and possibilities. Part of this discussion will be to decide at what level and to what extent they want to work cooperatively on implementing EDPs. Some may decide to use a common EDP format and process for all agencies; others will prefer that each school district or institution develop its own. Or, they may decide to have some combination of the two. Regardless of the approach, it is recommended that a regional planning group be formed, representing practitioners from each of the educational/community agencies involved, to advise and to help guide the designing and implementation of EDP processes.

In local school districts, planning may be incorporated with other school organizational efforts, e.g., the steering committee for the comprehensive guidance and counseling program, school improvement teams, curriculum committees, or other school-wide or district-wide planning groups. In many school districts, these planning groups, along with district and building administrators, will need to review school board policies and make recommendations that will provide for consistency in school district policy and how this policy is reflected in student handbooks, scheduling procedures, graduation policies, and student-parent communications. Similarly, postsecondary institutions and community agencies will need to review governing policies, funding options, and informational strategies for learners or clients.

### **5. *Collaboration and Planning Steps***

An EDP regional planning group can foster collaboration and development of successful strategies. The members of this group should consider a number of issues and action steps to support the implementation of EDP processes. With planning occurring at a regional level, these same or similar steps will need to be considered within each school district and building, institution, or agency location. Local districts and institutions may also decide that their educational programs need to be expanded to improve the quality of student experiences. Below is a suggested list of issues and activities for planning groups to consider:

1. Decide the purpose and content elements of an EDP based on state and local recommendations.
2. Determine the methods students will follow to develop and use them.
3. Set criteria for selecting/developing an EDP model.
4. Decide the desired format (paper, electronic variations).

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5. Review, select, and/or develop an EDP model.
6. Secure buy-in from various partners including decision-makers and implementors.
7. Discuss staff roles and the required professional development to prepare for these roles.
8. Identify/allow revisions of current career development processes.
9. Identify/support the updating of career information resources.
10. Determine what upgrading or expansion of technology is needed.
11. Plan how the EDP will be evaluated and revised to accommodate improvements.
12. Discuss funding and implementation possibilities.